

# ACCOUNTABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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## Abstract

The article considers the problem of higher education accountability in the Republic of Kazakhstan. There is a contradiction between government measures taken on the improvement of the system of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan and some conditions and Kazakhstan environment that prevents them from being efficient. The author tries to offer some solutions on the improvement of higher education accountability system.

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**Keywords:** Accountability of higher education, higher education administration, improvement of higher education system

## Introduction:

The problem of higher education accountability in the Republic of Kazakhstan is closely connected with an urgent problem that exists in our country nowadays the problem of the lack of professional, qualified and skilled specialists. On the one hand, there are too many graduates holding a higher education diploma (mostly in the area of economics and law), and on the other hand, the country lacks a lot of professional and qualified specialists. Therefore a lot of national companies are forced to employ specialists from foreign countries. This concerns especially oil and gas sector, maritime industry and also education.

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Such scholars as Kevin P. Kearns “Public productivity and management review”, David E. Leveille “Accountability in higher education: A Public Agenda for Trust and Cultural Change” and Roger Benjamin and Stephen Klein “Assessment Versus Accountability in Higher Education” have developed the theory of higher education accountability and education accountability system principles.

We would like to concentrate our research on the practical side of higher education accountability system inculcation in the system of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Due to the transition of Kazakhstan to market economy and new paradigm of education the Republic of Kazakhstan has faced many problems in restructuring and changing the system of education. A lot of changes have been introduced including the system of higher education since 1992. Some of them have brought excellent outcomes, some of them have not. But the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and all the educational institutions of higher education have been working on the improvement of the system of higher education and trying to make it better.

We also consider that the preconditions of the present state of the system of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan are the following:

**Bologna process.** The fact that the Republic of Kazakhstan has signed Bologna process also involved a lot of changes. In 2011 there was a complete transition to three level higher education system: Bachelor program, Master Program and PhD program. All the dissertation councils were closed and there are not any more candidates or doctors of sciences

who graduate. Therefore there is an urgent problem of absence of research staff and university professors and Phd programs are under the state of establishment and they do not yet train enough specialists to substitute “old” candidates and doctors of sciences.

**Credit system.** Credit system of education was introduced in the beginning of the years of 2000. But it took several years for the Ministry of education and science and universities to inculcate it. Still some of the principles of credit system of education are misunderstood and not always interpreted correctly. As a result there is a definite mess in the state standards of some programs and curricula. The problem of the percentage of obligatory and elective courses is still under discussion.

**Academic mobility.** According to Bologna process both professors and students have the right to free academic mobility. It means that every student has the right to study at least one semester in another university even a foreign one. The problem with students’ academic mobility is that there is no mechanism of credits acceptance and transference. Thus, students who studied at another university and have taken different courses (not those mentioned on their curriculum at home university) and they are not accepted or transferred at their home universities. As a result those students have to take more courses next semester and even pay for them extra money. Accommodation at university dormitories is another problem as some universities do not have space in the dormitory for their own students.

Professors’ academic mobility is even worse. On the one hand, professors are motivated to go and teach at another university, on the other hand, there is no mechanism of payment to such professors and no procedure for their being absent from their home university. Most Kazakhstan universities have not yet accepted such phenomenon as sabbatical.

At the same time the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan has introduced a program for foreign professors’ visits to Kazakhstan universities and even provide a rather good finance for that. The only problem with that program is language. Not all Kazakhstan students have enough English language level proficiency to be able to attend lectures in English. Kazakhstan faculty manage to communicate with their foreign colleagues with the help of interpreter that also makes the process of communication not a very easy one.

Another solution offered by Kazakhstan government is Bolashak program. It is a great instrument for sending both students and professors to foreign universities to acquire master program, Phd program, different kinds of trainings and internship. Just it needs time to have enough specialists who had training at foreign universities and came back to inculcate all they have learned and acquired.

Thus, there is a contradiction between government measures taken on the improvement of the system of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan and some conditions and Kazakhstan environment that prevents them from being efficient.

The system of higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been experiencing a great number of changes since 1992. However, there is no fixed and well-defined system of universities accountability. Some universities in Kazakhstan even have very bad reputation with the employers. As a result the latter refuse to employ such universities graduates and even mention this fact in the advertisements about vacant positions. Most of the companies refuse to employ university graduates without working experience, so this is a very important social problem at present which is closely connected with unemployment situation nowadays and in future. On the one hand, there are too many graduates holding a higher education diploma, on the other hand, the country lacks a lot professional and qualified specialists and is forced to employ a great number of specialists from foreign countries (especially, in oil and gas, maritime, finance, education, etc. sectors).

Therefore, Kazakhstan government, the Ministry of education and science, universities, companies, employers and interested organizations should develop a mutual strategy on higher education accountability system. Otherwise, in some 10-20 years there will

be no professional and qualified employees in the country and the problem of good highly professional and skilled labor will become a more serious problem than it is today.

Having worked in the position of vice-dean on MBA program at D. Serikbayev East-Kazakhstan state technical university, the head of academic mobility department and assistant professor at S. Yesenov Caspian state university of technologies and engineering we faced such problems as: deficit of professional qualified specialists in nearly all industrial areas of Kazakhstan, low demand for university graduates by local, national and international companies, absence of mechanisms for inculcating such principles of Bologna process as credit system, students and professors academic mobility, etc. All of them in our opinion are connected with the problem of higher education accountability.

One of the important issues in higher education accountability is the professional qualification of university faculty. One of the problematic issues in the system of higher education in Kazakhstan now is the availability of professors with Phd, doctorate and candidate degrees at Kazakhstan universities. There is a gap in university specialists training after the transition to three-step education system Bachelor – Master – Doctorate due to the fact that all dissertation Councils have been closed and there are not enough universities and programs for Phd specialists training. Also it will take several more years to develop the system of university faculty training.

During the times of the former Soviet union university faculty was raised from the student times. Most industrious, hard-working and interested in research students were employed as assistants at university departments. At the same time they entered post graduate program (aspirantura) and completed their research in the form of candidate dissertation. Candidate dissertation is a research in some applied science and includes an experiment. After candidate dissertation defense a young researcher had the right to work as senior lecturer or assistant professor and give lectures to students. The next stage was a doctorate dissertation that meant some real significant contribution to the development of a theoretical issue of science. The minimum period for doctorate dissertation data collection, observation, experiment, etc. was ten years. Most universities that had in their structure Dissertation councils made strong demands to the applicants. Candidate and Doctorate dissertations went through several stages of examinations, check-ups and finally a decision was made whether these works presented a real contribution to the modern science. This was the Soviet system of higher education accountability and assessment of university faculty. Candidate or Doctorate diploma and the degree of a candidate or doctor of science was the evidence of the researcher level.

Nowadays unfortunately in some CIS countries the diploma is not the evidence of the person's qualifications. Also some dissertations contain a lot of plagiarism and sometimes their authors did not really write them as there are a lot of offers in the internet to write some paper (graduation paper, thesis, master dissertation, doctorate dissertation, etc.).

Consequently qualification of some university faculty is under a great doubt.

Another problem is that some faculty having worked for 10 or even more years at the university still do not have an academic title or scientific degree though some of them have great practical and teaching experience. But while university attestation and accreditation the index of professors and faculty holding academic title and science degree is one of the most important. Programs that do not have enough professors can be closed according to the recommendation of attestation Committee. Thus some universities make such tricks as combine departments, show less number of faculty or even fire some faculty for the period of attestation.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion it is necessary to point out that high quality, accessibility and economic efficiency are the main goals of education. Education predetermines the quality of human

resources of the state, has the key significance for its competitiveness. Higher education accountability in this context is not the problem of one university or country but a global problem.

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